Waste Reduction Goal Task Force
BRIEFING PAPER
For
Alternative Waste Reduction Policies

Background: In 1989 the Environmental Protection Agency set a 25% percent waste reduction and recycling goal. In response to this many state government instituted their own waste reductions goals. Most of these goals were similar to the language of EPA's 25% reduction goal. In 1996 the EPA changed their goal to 35%.

Since this time, there have been several other waste reduction goals adopted around the world that are more ambitious than the EPA's percentile method. Below is a list of some current waste reduction goals that have been spotlighted in popular media. Included in this list are goals from the European Union and the State of California as both of these entities tend to be trendsetters in environmental policy and legislation**.**

Zero Waste Stream:

Zero waste stream initiatives focus on a multi-layered approach toward reducing and thus ultimately ending the need for land filling. These programs are very ambitious and no completely successful zero waste program has been implemented. The concept is to create a very high, arguably unattainable goal to spark a more moderate compromised response.

Among Zero Waste goals are:

- redesigning products and packaging for durability, reuse and recyclability

- creating jobs from waste

- product stewardship where material responsibility is placed on the producer and consumer and not the local governments

- "true cost accounting"

- investment in infrastructure to process waste and use instead of landfills.

Current European Union Waste Reduction Goals

Under legislation passed in early 2007 by the European Union, waste production must level off and stop growing by 2012. A target of waste reduction would be reached by 2020.

To prevent and reduce waste production, the hierarchy lays down an order of preference for waste operations - first prevention, then re-use, recycling, other recovery operations and, as a last resort, safe and environmentally sound disposal.

New energy efficiency standards were set for waste to energy centers of which many European nations rely heavily upon for solid waste management.

By 2020, 50 percent of municipal solid waste and 70 percent of waste from construction, demolition, industry and manufacturing must be re-used or recycled. By 2015, landfill will be banned for at least paper, glass, textiles, plastic and metal. By that date separate waste collection systems for these categories must be set up. By 2020, no recyclable waste must end up in landfill sites.

Current California Waste Reduction Goals

California's current aim is to reach a 50% diversion of waste from landfills. This diversion rate does not include C&D landfills as Tennessee's current diversion rate and more closely follows the EPA definitions for Municipal Solid Waste. They are still working toward this goal and have yet to stabilize the tonnages of waste going into Class I landfills on a per capita basis. California's landfills have been receiving increases in waste at a similar rate as Tennessee

New initiatives include "Zero Waste California" which is a non mandated program that educated the public towards the idea of Zero Waste Stream.

New Strategic initiatives set forth in 2006 aim to help California toward a 50% diversion rate. Those initiatives are listed below.

1. Provide vigorous oversight of local jurisdictions to ensure that 50 percent diversion is maintained among those that have already attained it.
2. Increase the number of local jurisdictions that reach the 50 percent level.
3. Continually increase the statewide annual diversion rate beyond 50 percent.
4. Increase the annual waste tire diversion rate to 90 percent by 2015.
5. Work with other State agencies to minimize litter and the uncontrolled release of materials harmful to the environment.
6. Seek statutory authority by September 2008 to develop a timely and accurate compliance measurement system.
7. Develop a full-cost accounting analysis to compare the costs and benefits of recycling, composting, technology, and landfills.

Product Stewardship

Product stewardship is a product-centered approach to waste management. Product stewardship is often called extended product responsibility (EPR). The phrase “from cradle to grave” is sometimes used to describe product stewardship concepts. Product stewardship calls on those in the product life cycle—manufacturers, retailers, users, and disposers—to share responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of the products they create.

The Following is from EPA’s Product Stewardship’s Website

Product stewardship is a different "take" on the manufacturer-centered extended producer responsibility laws we often hear about abroad. Product stewardship recognizes that product manufacturers can and must take on new responsibilities to reduce the environmental footprint of their products. Without serious producer commitment, we as a country cannot make significant progress toward improved resource conservation and a sustainable economy. However, real change cannot always be achieved by producers acting alone: retailers, consumers, and the existing waste management infrastructure may have to pitch in for the most workable and cost-effective solution. The solutions and the actors will vary from one product system to another.

From the State and Regional level, product stewardship is of little enforcement potential as products are often national if not international. Some states have developed product stewardship-type legislation for selected products. More and more state procurement officials are encouraging product stewardship innovations through their purchasing programs. In many cases, states need to work with their neighboring states to develop cost-effective approaches to handling problem wastes. Some more popular product stewardship movements include the management of computers, batteries, paint, and florescent bulbs.

Issues:

To Be Determined By Task Force

Focus Questions:

1.